

WILLIAM CARPENTER
THE LARGER FIELD FOR THE
REHABILITATION OF THE BLIND



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

Dec 11 1911
HV 1711
C
copy 1

THE LARGER FIELD FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE BLIND

WILLIAM CARPENTER

State Welfare Director, Michigan

IT IS with fear and trembling that I approach this subject this evening. I do not speak so much from the standpoint of my knowledge of this field as I do from the standpoint of my heartfelt convictions.

An old master was one time asked to review a painting by one of his pupils. After surveying this painting he took a piece of chalk and underneath the painting he wrote one word, "Amplius," the Latin word meaning "larger." By adding this word he conveyed the idea that the young artist's conception was all right as far as it went, but, in order that others might appreciate it as a masterpiece, he must enlarge it.

And so this evening I feel that in approaching this subject that has been assigned to me that our pre-conceived ideas regarding the rehabilitation of the blind may be all right as far as we have gone, but we as educators, superintendents, and members of commissions, and the public at large, must enlarge our vision, and then add to it cooperation and heartfelt interest, if we would enlarge our work in this State for the rehabilitation of the blind.

I became thoroughly "sold" on this idea a few years ago when I was attending the National Convention of the American

Legion held in San Antonio, Texas. We had distinguished guests there from all over the world. They were introduced at appropriate times and occasions but the picture that has remained with me and was written deep in my memory was the occasion when John Scovell, a blind World War veteran from Pennsylvania, introduced to the assembly of legionnaires Major Scapini, a member of the House of Deputies of France. Without any hesitancy on his part whatsoever, John Scovell stepped to the front of the platform and addressed the large convocation as eloquently as any man I ever heard, as he introduced his blind brother-in-arms from France, Major Scapini.

Major Scapini stepped out on the platform and a small stand was placed in front of him, on which was a book written in the French Braille. As he addressed the assembly in perfect English, his fingers traveled back and forth across his notes which he had translated into the English language. I couldn't help but think, as I sat there, of the great obstacles that the two veterans had overcome by their persistence and the wonderful spirit within. Neither one made any reference whatsoever to his handicap, for he did not treat it as a handicap, and I can safely say, without any fear of contradiction, that as Major Scapini described the parade which had taken place the day before, that he had seen many things which we fellows who had taken part in the parade had failed to witness.

In other words, it proved to me that literally here was a case of the blind leading the blind.

So tonight, as I speak to you people, I speak to you first from the standpoint of one who is intensely interested in the activities in the future of the Michigan Association of Workers for the Blind.

Years ago I was taught that education is such a preparation of an individual as will enable him to get the most out of life, and give the most in return from his life. I can see no reason why there should be any exception made on this hypothesis to those who are physically blind.

I believe that in the early years of the blind person's life

just as much emphasis should be placed on physical education and recreation to insure in after years a strong body, free from disease or defects, that will house a strong mind and a strong inner spirit.

It has always seemed to me in the past that we have neglected to a certain extent the emphasis on physical training to the young who are blind.

Then as we consider education, it is termed also as a "leading out" process, coming from the Latin "educō." One of the first mediums of communicating conceptions of ideas is that of speech. The blind child readily learns to speak as easily, and perhaps more so, than the child that is normal. Granting that this method of communication is free and equal, the first obstacle I see in the universal mode of enlarging ideas and exploring new fields comes through the fact that there is no universally adopted code of printing for the blind in the world today.

The systems range all the way from the Perkins Letter Line system to the Point systems, which I am told many blind people prefer, to the American Braille of raised dots, an off-shoot of the Lewis Braille system of France; and I would also include the New York point system.

I know it is confusing enough for one with sight who has studied French, German, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, to try and piece together information written in any one of these languages when the native tongue is English. It would seem to me, as a layman unable to read any of the systems set up for the blind, that it would be more acceptable if there was one universal system of print for the blind. I can readily see how that today the blind suffer not from the confusion of tongues but from the confusion of prints.

With a universal medium such as I mention, how easy it would be then for blind people to branch out into the various fields of learning, and there discover new planets of thought and research. No little item connected with this would be the eliminating of the dual expense in setting up periodicals and

research works which now necessarily are confused and cumbersome.

Statisticians tell us that today there are better than 130,000 blind people in the United States and the majority of them are adults. To me, if I was a blind adult, it would look like a difficult undertaking to learn three or four different systems of reading, but if I had just one system to familiarize myself with, which would be the gateway to various fields of knowledge, I would gladly put forth the effort to master it. It would seem to me that with a universal system of print for the blind, it would also enlarge the field of operation among the thousands of blind people I have mentioned, in the printing of literature and books of knowledge and religion and music.

Why have I mentioned this medium at all? It is for the reason that it refers back to my definition of education. The preparation of an individual so he will receive the most out of life and be able to give the most in return, and this leads to our next thought, that of vocation, or calling.

The greater the capacity of an individual the greater will be their service to humanity. We have been thinking, I feel, too much in terms of jobs for the blind, and not enough in the terms of ability and capacity.

Years ago the trend was to institutionalize the blind and give them perpetual care. This left out entirely the idea that I have mentioned, of capacity and ability. Today there is a trend in another direction. New York and Massachusetts have made complete surveys in their respective States with funds provided by their Legislatures to ascertain the number of blind people in their States, just where they live, just what they do, and just what they are capable of doing. To say the least, this survey has brought out what has been left undone by the State and the public at large for the rehabilitation of the blind. It has brought out the fact that the further successful rehabilitation of the blind lies not in institutionalism alone but in individual training for further usefulness in the great world's work, according to capacity and ability.

Then in the field of industry, it was not so many years ago the general public had the idea that blind people could not compete in this field, but today we find this idea has given way to constructive measures whereby the blind people are competing not only in industry but in other occupations as well.

It might surprise some of our golf enthusiasts who are present here to know that many of the golf balls put out by the Dunlap Rubber Co., of Toronto, are wrapped by a girl with less than 3 per cent. sight, and she maintains a normal production of 75 to 85 an hour.

In some of the bottling works in our country, cork-washers are placed inside the caps by blind workers.

The Crosley Radio Corporation, in Toronto, reports blind workers assembling loud speakers and other apparatus. One blind operator in the Westinghouse Electric Co., at Hamilton, handles twice in an hour 300 bulbs.

Thus we find the blind in various industrial factories, setting up paste board cartons, building boxes, assembling automobile wheels, assembling kiddie-car wheels, stringing tennis rackets, filling cement sacks with compressed air machines, working on assembly lines in automobile factories, stuffing automobile cushions, operating drill presses, delivering from a printing press, dressing splits of leather, assembling pumps, winding strips of rubber hose, and operating a thousand and one other things in the great field of industry too numerous to mention. In Cleveland alone, 79 different types of factory positions are served by blind people in competition with sight-labor. All this is in addition to the 50 per cent. of the blind people, according to Dr. Betts, who are engaged in the four major trades, music, broom-making, piano-tuning and weaving.

I have mentioned the field of industry because in a sense our State is behind in this movement and all that we need is to demonstrate that the blind can compete with sight labor to the management of our various industrial concerns to assure the proper quota of employment when times are normal.

If the blind can compete with sight labor in industry, is

there any reason why this field cannot be enlarged according to capacity in the higher forms of learning and other vocations in life? Sir Arthur Pearsons, who in 1914 established St. Dunstan's Hostel in Canada to re-educate blind war veterans, has demonstrated much that can be done in this great field of endeavor.

Hundreds of blind veterans have gone into the field of insurance, real estate, poultry raising, massaging, typing, and in professional life as lawyers, clergymen, store-keepers, and teachers.

I am not speaking tonight so much to you blind people as I am to those who are present who are interested in this State work of rehabilitation. If the blind people themselves have the initiative and the ability and the willingness and the perseverance, our responsibility as a public, as a State, begins where their training leaves off, and they are ready to go out in the great world's work.

In our State we are doing certain things for the rehabilitation of the blind. Perhaps we need, however, to enlarge our vision. We have sympathetic superintendents of our institutions for the blind in this State, and we also have an Institute Commission intensely interested in the welfare of the blind. Our great objective, I believe, through the cooperation of the Rehabilitation Department of Public Instruction is to inform the public mind of the need of greater cooperation and better legislation in our State. We need the cooperation of societies and clubs in our State, in addition to the Lions Clubs—which will help our Michigan Association of Workers for the Blind to rehabilitate these people after they are trained.

These clubs and societies can do much to create sentiment whereby the public will realize and sense their responsibility in giving these people a chance after they have been trained.

In summary let me say this: Let us lay greater emphasis upon the physical education of the blind youth. Let us enlarge our field of occupational opportunities and protect it by proper legislation, so that our blind people of this State will not receive

our pity, but will receive our sympathy in a constructive way, whereby they may go forth as free and equal citizens, self-supporting, self-sustaining, to give to the world characters that are worth-while, to perform a worthy work according to their capacity, by a worthy service.

(Given at the Michigan Association of Workers for the Blind, Lansing, Michigan, June, 1932.)

EXCHANGES

The Crippled Child,
International Society for Crippled
Children,
Elyria, Ohio.

Outlook for the Blind,
125 East 46th Street,
New York, N. Y.

Hospital School Journal,
390 Cliff Street,
Battle Creek, Michigan.

The Industrial Doctor,
702 Iroquois Building,
Buffalo, N. Y.

The Royal Society of Medicine,
London, England.

International Labour Review,
Geneva, Switzerland.

The Open Window,
The Shut-In Society,
129 East 34th Street,
New York City.

The Pendulum,
Home for Incurables,
St. Paul's Room,
Belmont & Conshohocken Aves.
Philadelphia, Pa.

Northwestern Health Journal,
Minnesota Public Health Assn.,
11 W. Summit Avenue,
St. Paul, Minn.

Journal of the Outdoor Life,
450 Seventh Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

Mental Hygiene,
450 Seventh Avenue,
New York, N. Y.

The Volta Review,
1537 35th Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

The Jewish Deaf,
210 West 91st Street,
New York, N. Y.

The Auditory Outlook,
1537 35th Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

The Vocational Teacher,
223 Turley Avenue,
Council Bluffs, Iowa

The Sight-Saving Review,
The National Society for the
Prevention of Blindness,
450 Seventh Avenue,
New York City.

INFORMATION is requested as to any publication dealing with any phase of the rehabilitation problem. Kindly send such information to the REHABILITATION REVIEW, 28 East 21st Street, New York, N. Y.



